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5 July 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: CIA Member, NFIB

THROUGH : Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : The Value of Intelligence Conferences

1. Intelligence and intelligence related conferences and conventions are considered by senior Agency officials to be vital in the intelligence process. Officials familiar with the participation of CIA specialists at conferences outside of the Washington area cite numerous benefits. International intelligence conferences provide our representatives with the benefits of the resources of other intelligence services on issues that we are interested in. These include both analytical perspectives and intelligence data. Another distinct benefit that accrues from Agency participation in international intelligence conferences is policy related. When OSR analysts participate in [] or NATO intelligence conferences, for instance, and present the Agency's view of military or strategic threats from the Warsaw Pact, this may well have implications in the defense postures of allied governments. Our participation at intelligence conferences in other US cities is unanimously viewed as essential by CIA components concerned with analysis of foreign military, scientific, and technical developments.

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2. The most often cited value of our attendance at intelligence conferences is in the area of the new analytical insights that are acquired. An important scientific and technical exchange occurs, for example, with the [] countries in the area of aircraft analysis, defensive systems, space systems, offensive land-based missile systems and naval systems. [] participation in [] conferences with [] methodology and [] concepts in the area of aircraft analysis. With a different military industrial environment [] analysis frequently has led to rethinking by US specialists. In the field of electronics, the [] presents at least half as many papers at liaison conferences as the US, a very substantial number considering the relative size of the two intelligence communities. [] conferences have presented COMINT analysis on the design and fabrications of satellite interceptors. This information has been of substantial value to US scientific and technical experts.

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3. The NATO economics conferences that our OER specialists attend are exceedingly helpful to that office in terms of analytic support. The NATO allies frequently are our best sources of information in such areas as Western trade with bloc countries, trade in strategic goods, technology transfer, etc. Conferences, whether in the US or overseas, typically benefit our analytical efforts in either of two ways: by tending to confirm or corroborate CIA estimates or by introducing alternate hypotheses. [redacted] has been particularly helpful in the latter. Finally the direct benefits to our analysts also derive from the willingness of allied intelligence service to reallocate their analytical resources and to upgrade or shift their research efforts as a result of participation at intelligence conferences. In the area of naval systems, for instance,

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4. The second major benefit from our participation in intelligence conferences is in the area of enhanced intelligence collection. OER officials, for instance, explain that their participation at NATO conferences is especially useful in "helping to finally tune collection

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5. The offices that are the primary participants in intelligence conferences outside of the Washington area believe that the meetings are cost-effective, as well as highly productive. Conferences in scientific and technical fields often are held outside of the Washington area because it is cheaper to do so.

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[redacted] Also, because of the need for participation of a large number of employees of US nuclear weapons labs (LASL and LLL), it was cost-effective to hold a meeting of the Nuclear Weapons Working group (JAEIC) at Los Alamos than in Washington. In general, it is cheaper to go where the experts are than to bring the experts to Washington.

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5. International meetings are proposed only where critical problems of mutual interest exist or can be anticipated and where working level discussions of the data base and analytical judgments and techniques will serve US interests. A major reduction of these international conferences would carry substantial penalties. We would lose access to valuable analysis in a number of fields.

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